

Medicine Wheel¹

I. Wolf: The Teacher East²

I watch you, three and pink
in your footie pajamas, build
a house, first of foam then
of plastic blocks, and whimsy
holds it together: purple circle
on top of green triangle. And
my Wolf heart huffs and puffs
and blows your house
down, knowing you must
learn to live inside a world of brick
and stone: red square on top
of red square on top of gray.
And fear holds it together.

¹ “In the Medicine Wheel Spread, each of the four directions reveals certain things that you need to reflect upon in your personality. They also disclose how you are learning from yourself, from others, and from the animals” (*Medicine Cards* Jamie Sams and David Carson).

² “The card in this position reveals where your spiritual strength lies, and indicates the direction your spiritual path is taking. It can also reveal the major challenge to seeing clearly in your present situation” (*Medicine Cards*).

II. Buffalo (Contrary): Closed Fist South³

A closed fist cannot hold
a child's hand or unwrap
a chocolate kiss. In gray
October, white Buffalo
walked with me in a fur
suit. She carried a pumpkin
full of prayer and humbly
went from door to door,
from chocolate kiss to kiss—
abundance—until my fists spilled open
to hold her heart.

³“The card in this position describes how its animal medicine is teaching the child within you, as your adultself walks through life. It is what you need to trust in yourself and what you need to nurture in your growing process” (*Medicine Cards*).

III. Swan: Grace

West⁴

In a lost wood, I looked into
a pool but could not see my
self. Then I fell asleep and fell

in Dream and tasted teeth, great
tumbling molars, crumbling
to dust on my tongue. Then

Swan dipped her beak and dripped
teeth in the pool, and Dream
turned these to words and words

and words. Then Swan drew
them in like feathers on a wing
and storied me in the water.

⁴ “The card in this position gives you the internal solution to your present life challenges. It indicates where your goals need attention and how to reach the desired end” (*Medicine Cards*).

IV. Whale: The Record Keeper North⁵

Sand and cold and the glint
of the Atlantic—green not blue—black rocks
and seaweed, sharp
underfoot. The ever-moving sea
rises, falls, rolls, sings forward,
draws back—
and Whale records
her story,
her ever-changing rock and sand.
And the sea, ever-returning, extends herself again,
bringing song
in sand and weed, salt and bone, back
to this altar
of bramble and stone.

⁵ “The card in this position teaches you how you may spiritually apply and integrate the lessons of the other directions. The Animal Medicine of the card appearing in the North is the key to walking in wisdom, knowing the teacher within, and connecting to the higher-self’s purpose and intention” (*Medicine Cards*).

V. Mouse: The Detailer
Sacred Mountain⁶

beetles in the roses and ivy on the brick
last fall's leaves littering the stoop
lip prints ringing "Os" on the window
mold growing grout in the shower

Mouse creeps down from my eye
nibbling lines
detailing mother
in the mirror

stretch marks radiate from the insides
of knees ringing like the insides of trees
my hips my belly this public
record of a daughter's outgrowing

my eyes her eyes
mirrors
Mouse stamping
happiness like age all over this house this time this body

⁶ "The position of the Sacred Mountain asks you to look at the present. In this position you are standing, in a sense, at the crossroads of the spiritual and physical realities. This card will therefore indicate how your spiritual and physical realities have melded to produce the "you" of the present moment. Since all things evolve, tomorrow this 'you' will have grown in understanding and your card may be different. In accepting this omen of who you are in the present, you may then see what needs changing or modifying, whether you are balanced or upset, and if you need to enter the silence for answers" (*Medicine Cards*).